



Learning from Perception Data

Why go this route?

- To make informed decisions about students and the learning environment.
- To measure stakeholders' perceptions of the learning community—because perception does shape reality.
- To measure the school's self-perception against the community's image of the school.
- To identify program effectiveness.

You'll know you've arrived when...

- Student, staff, parent and community perception data is a meaningful part of the school's data profile.
- Perception data is considered a part of the strategic planning process.
- The School Improvement Plan reflects perception data.
- Perception data is used to effect changes in the learning environment.

Construction Zone



It's about **TIME**

- Set aside an hour or more for the Data Committee to convene a meeting to answer each of the four questions outlined in the process.
- Give parents at least one week to complete and return surveys.
- Allow time for students to complete their surveys during one homeroom period.
- Teachers can complete their surveys during a staff meeting.
- The Data Committee will need about an hour to present and discuss the data findings with the staff.

Allow additional time to:

- Make program changes as indicated by the perception data.




Potential **COSTS**

- Copying the surveys may involve a nominal cost. Other than that, you should be ready to proceed with collecting perception data.

The Process

*A step-by-step guide to
using perception data to drive
school-wide decision-making.*

NOTE: Steps marked with a  are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

- 1 Charge your Data Committee** with answering the questions in Steps 2-5 together with your Learning Community.

Thinking about perception data is harder than just collecting it. You'll need someone to spearhead this effort and be responsible for reflective thinking about the conclusions. If you don't already have a data committee, see MI-Map Packet 8.1 "Setting up Decision-making Teams" for a process for chartering teams. This packet can serve as the charge this particular team is given, if you believe perception data is the place to start. An alternative approach would be to establish a "Culture/Climate" committee to focus exclusively on managing perceptions and their roots. See MI-Map Packet 3.1 "Developing A Climate/Culture Committee" for a process outlining how to organize your committee.

- 2 Agree together: What Is Perception Data and Why Is It Important?**

Chart your reasons for looking at perception data and identify the potential benefits of this data to your school. Use the template chart (INSERT for Step 2) as an example of how one learning community completed this task as a guide. Complete your own school's chart on the blank INSERT B for Step 2.

- 3 Agree together: What Is the Effect of Perception on the School from *Within* the Learning Community?**

There are many measures of perception that the Data Committee could use to examine the school's self-perception. The surveys included are examples of instruments for examining student as well as staff perceptions. The Student Engagement Survey (Insert A for Step 3) looks at student habits that affect achievement. Student habits are often guided by perceptions surrounding instructional methodology, teacher characteristics, and specific social conditions within the school.

Tally the responses from the surveys to help you analyze the data.

The Teacher Decision-Making Survey (Insert B for Step 3) helps you identify the perceived building leaders. This information is critical to capacity-building within your organization.

See also MI-Map Packets 3:1 "Developing a Culture Committee" and 3:2 "Auditing & Understanding Your School Culture" for additional sample surveys.

- 4 Agree together: What Is the Effect of Perception on the School from *Outside* the Learning Community?**

You can use the Parent Satisfaction Survey found in MI-Map Packet 3:1 "Developing a Culture/Climate Committee" or another found in Packet 3:2 "Auditing Your School's Culture" or any other survey that the Data Committee finds useful. Usually, these surveys focus on key components of the educational program including: Academics, School Environment, Leadership/Staff and Communication.

The Gallup Organization conducts national random sample surveys of parents with children in both public and private schools. These surveys serve as useful national benchmarks about parent satisfaction with the schools. The complete survey can be found at <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpol0009.htm>

- 5 Agree together: Did the School's Self-Perception and the Perceptions of Others Match?**

Analyze the data for points of variance. Seek stakeholder input for possible solutions for closing the gap between self-perception and community image. Use INSERT A for Step 5 to help with this process. INSERT B for Step 5 may be used to guide a staff to develop an action plan to address issues raised by perception data.

Getting more mileage from working with perception data

Digging in with perception data can benefit your school relative to the following initiatives:

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- NCLB's requirement for broader collection of information on individual student performance includes not only outcomes, but also behaviors and perceptions which correlate with student achievement. The surveys included in this packet will generate data the school improvement team can use to identify intervening variables which need improvement to positively impact student achievement. The data collected in this area will also contribute to the reporting requirements outlined in NCLB's Safe Schools provisions.

Education YES!

- Michigan's accreditation system will measure student achievement with multiple indicators and multiple years of data rather than a single test on a single day. Perception data is one kind of data that school improvement teams can decide to work on. Systematic efforts to improve and document shifts in perception data could be used as evidence to document schools performance on the indicators of Engagement and Learning Opportunities.

MI-Plan

- MI Plan requires Michigan schools to name three data points for any strategy they choose to include in their School Improvement Plan. Baseline perception data could form the basis for a strategy that addressed climate/culture change.



Resources

Articles

“Data-Driven Decisions”

Articles by Theodore B. Creighton, Raymond Yeagley, Philip A. Streifer, Francis Barnes, Marilyn Miller and George A. Goens. *The School Administrator*, April 2001.

This issue of *The School Administrator* includes a number of articles on data-driven decision-making. *The School Administrator* is available online at <http://www.aasa.org>

Books

At Your Fingertips— Using Everyday Data to Improve Schools

Karen Levesque, Denise Bradby, Kristi Rossi and Peter Teitelbaum. MPR Associates Inc. and American Association of School Administrators and National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1998.

This handbook teaches educators new and productive ways of using data. Through step-by-step instruction, this book focuses on using available data to improve teaching and learning. Further information is available at <http://www.mprinc.com>

The School Portfolio Toolkit

Victoria Bernhardt, *Eye on Education*, 2002.

Bernhardt's workbook leads the reader through an eight-step process to build a school's own data portfolio.

Getting Excited About Data: How to Combine People, Passion and Proof

Edie L. Holcomb. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA, 1999.

This book outlines a process for showing how well a school or district meets its primary goal: sustained student learning. The author offers tips on finding answers to questions about data, such as, “What data do we need?” “How do we collect it?” and “What do we do with it?”

Using Data To Improve Student Achievement

Deb Wahlstrom. Successline Publications. Chesapeake, VA 1999.

Michigan's Partner Educators found Wahlstrom's thinking invaluable in explaining how to collect, organize, analyse and use data for practical decision-making.

For more information, contact

Office of School Improvement
Michigan Department of Education
517/241-4285

People

Specialists

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on data collection and interpretation in their service areas.

Coaches

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are active in data analysis in Michigan schools. Please visit:

www.abcscoaches.org

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